



# Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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## Midwest Utility Regulators Unite to Request Energy Funding *Letter urges Congress to fund energy assistance programs*

MADISON – Today, the Public Service Commission (PSC) initiated a letter to Congress requesting additional funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Increased LIHEAP funding is critical for low-income families in the Midwest. Six other states' utility regulators joined in signing the letter.

For the first time in history, it is projected that this season's average winter heating bills for U.S. consumers will exceed \$1000 as a result of runaway natural gas prices. Natural gas is an unregulated commodity, which the PSC has no control of. Higher energy costs take a larger share of low-income household budgets; LIHEAP has gone from helping low-income families pay almost 50 percent of their heating bills to less than 30 percent today.

The letter points out that Midwest states are doing what they can to help families meet high heating bills. In Wisconsin, Governor Jim Doyle announced his *Energy Help* initiative, a comprehensive plan to help Wisconsin meet these rising energy costs. His plan provides an additional \$16 million to help low-income families pay their heating bills, more than doubling the state's commitment to heating assistance. In addition, the Governor called for a special session of the Legislature to take action on his \$6 million energy assistance package for working families.

Federal funding for LIHEAP has not kept pace with increasing energy costs. Congress should follow Wisconsin's lead by providing more funding to help low-income families pay their energy bills.

The PSC has joined South Dakota, North Dakota, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota in sending the letter which urges Congress to help consumers pay for what could be the most expensive heating season in history. Utility regulators from these states will also be visiting Washington D.C. next week to further encourage the federal government to act expediently on this problem.

For more information on energy assistance in Wisconsin, visit the Energy Help website at <http://energyhelp.wi.gov/> or call 800-522-3014.

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